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The dark side of control assessing control in relationships from a dyadic and longitudinal perspective

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Ivelina N. Naydenova entitled "The dark side of control assessing control in relationships from a dyadic and longitudinal perspective." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Warren H. Jones, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

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The Dark Side of Control: Assessing Control in Relationships from a Dyadic and
Longitudinal Perspective

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ivelina N. Naydenova
May 2009

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ABSTRACT

Psychological research suggests that, other things being equal, the desire for or exercise of control over consequences is advantageous to the individual. However, in the context of relationships the preference and enactment of control may be more problematic. The primary purpose of the present research was to advance the study of control in relationships through the validation of a self-report instrument specifically designed to measure it. Specifically the goals of this research project included: (a) to further validate the Control in Relationships Scale (CIR) using a dyadic and longitudinal approaches, (b) to further differentiate the control and power construct, and (c) to explore the role and the importance of the construct in romantic relationships.

Study 1 assessed the association between control and relationship satisfaction from a dyadic perspective. The results indicated that CIR was inversely associated with relationship satisfaction for both partners. Specifically, partner control was strongly correlated with own relationship satisfaction for women but not for men. Furthermore, men tended to perceive the relationship as more egalitarian than women did. Furthermore, in Study 1, CIR was compared with extant power measure and the results suggested that CIR was significantly associated with most power measures, but it was not a redundant construct and it was a better predictor of relationship satisfaction than any of the power measures.

Study 2 assessed the relationship between control and satisfaction from a longitudinal point of view and the results suggested that individual's self-perceived

control ratings at Time 1 was inversely associated with their relationship satisfaction at Time 2, for high control women and average control men. Next, non-test validity analyses were undertaken by comparing CIR scores to rated narrative accounts of betrayal by students. As expected, CIR was significantly associated with ratings of own control at both Time 1 and Time 2. Taken together, results support that utility of the CIR as a valid measure of control in relationships, indicate the differences between the power and control constructs, and support the notion that control in relationships is associated with negative relationships functioning.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Personal control is an intrinsic part of the Western ideal of well-being and not surprisingly has been a subject of considerable research. Specifically, general control is one of the most widely researched topics in psychology. For example, high desirability of control and internal locus of control have both been linked to success and overall adjustment to life among many other positive qualities (Burger & Solano, 1994; Gottfried, 1985; Harter & Connell, 1984). However, despite the prolific research on control, remarkably little attention has been given to the role of control in personal relationships. The current literature lacks a clear conceptualization and sound instrumentation to assess the construct in the domain of close relationships. Historically, control in relationships has been conceptualized as the behavioral outcome of power (Szinovacz, 1987, Safilios-Rothschild, 1980; Gray-Little, Baucom & Hamby, 1996; McDonald 1980; Stets, 1991, 1993, 1995). Specifically for the purposes of this paper, control is defined as the relationship-specific desire to influence partner's behavior and relationship outcomes. After reviewing all the available literature treating control in relationships, Naydenova and Jones (2008) found that 90 % of the articles that discuss control in relationships use a new and unique instrument that has been developed for the purposes of the study in question and that often has unreported reliability and validity properties. Also, instruments designed to measure a number of different constructs have been used to assess control in relationships. For example, measures of self-control, self-mastery, decision-making

and locus of control were used to assess control in various studies (O'Neill & Kerig, 2000; Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; Lucas & Peterson, 1991). Because these instruments often measure a diverse number of constructs other than control in relationships, a direct comparison among studies of control in relationships are problematic and conspicuously absent from the literature. In an effort to rectify these issues in the literature, Naydenova & Jones (2007) developed the control in relationships scale (e.g. CIR). Four studies, examining data from over 1,300 participants were conducted in order to develop and validate the CIR. First, in general CIR was shown to satisfy conventional standards of measurement in that it appeared to be both internally consistent and reliable over time. Second, a confirmatory factor analysis verified that the factor structure of the scale was robust, interpretable, and yielded a list of tentative components of relationship relevant control. The purpose of the current study is to undertake a program of research aimed at furthering knowledge about the control in relationships construct building on previous research done to develop a control in relationships scale (Naydenova & Jones, 2007). Specifically, this research will examine the implications for the control in relationships construct from longitudinal and interpersonal perspectives.

Literature Review

Extant research generally supports the idea that control in its various manifestations is a desirable quality for the individual. For example, low scores on perceived control have been associated with fewer individual accomplishments (personal control), interpersonal relations (interpersonal control) and group effectiveness (sociopolitical control; Paulhus, 1983; Paulhus & Christie, 1981). In the

extreme, a lack of personal control is indicative of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), which has been linked to depression among other negative outcomes. For example, elderly nursing home patients who were not offered control over their environment were found to decline faster physically and die sooner as compared to patients who were encouraged to exert more personal control, who became happier and more active (Rodin, 1986). These results were observed even though the control relevant issues were minor.

As a specific example of research treating control as a positive quality, internal locus of control, which is defined as one's belief that one is an active agent in one's life, has been extensively and firmly linked to personal mastery in a number of areas such as academic achievement (Gottfried, 1985; Harter & Connell, 1984), good health (Krause, 1987; Rodin, 1986), high self-esteem, low neuroticism, active coping strategies, fewer work-related problems and others (Brosschot, Gebhardt, & Godaert, 1994). However, control is not a unidimensional construct and locus of control is not the only aspect of control that has been studied. High desire for control usually characterizes assertive and proactive individuals who tend to be successful in life, whereas those low in desire for control are passive, often described as followers who tend to allow or prefer others to make important decisions for them (Burger & Cooper, 1979). Furthermore, people who have higher perceived personal control and a higher desire for control tend to dominate conversations, be more engaging speakers, excel at achievement related tasks, have greater influence on other people, and be more confident (Burger & Solano, 1994). High levels of perceived control are also related to lower levels of depression (Burger & Solano, 1994; Burger, 1984).

Burger (2005) and others have argued that control is not always a positive or desirable characteristic. For example, increased control may result in a greater sense of responsibility for outcomes thereby increasing pressure and anxiety. Also, control and predictability over necessary but aversive events typically increase the unpleasantness of the resulting outcomes. Furthermore, most people do not seek nor maintain control in domains of experience beyond their expertise or competence. The aforementioned findings suggest that the psychological effects of control may be at least partly linked to the context in which control is desired or sought. To illustrate, control is clearly advantageous to the individual in contexts that are inherently competitive (e.g., achievement, success) or that favor active rather than passive strategies (e.g., health).

On the other hand, desiring or exercising control in the context of relationships would seem to necessitate careful attention to the needs and characteristics of the relationship partner. In addition, in contrast to taking control with respect to anonymous or generalized others, control in the context of a relationship may carry an implication of lacking trust for the partner. Trust is generally regarded as a necessary condition for long term, close, and mutually-satisfying relationships (e.g. Holmes, 1991; Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997). Thus, although need for control in relationships seems to be conceptually similar to more familiar constructs of control -- as all have the underlying theme of mastering the environment -- control in the context of relationships seems to carry a more problematic set of implications. Furthermore, this negative impact of control in relationships would seem to be the most evident when

considering outcomes from a dyadic rather than an individualistic perspective (i.e., the outcome for the couple rather than its participants, *cf.* Dindia & Fitzpatrick, 1985).

Although relatively little research has been devoted to control in relationships, available evidence appears to support these conjectures. For example, previous research on trust in relationships suggests that efforts to control as exhibited by one or both partners in a relationship not only undermine trust, but are also disruptive for the relationship and contribute to both partners' psychological distress (Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985; Jones, et al., 1997). Similarly, people high in need for relationship control have been shown to exhibit more negative interpersonal behaviors, such as blaming the partner more for recent conflicts, finding less fault with oneself and scoring lower on relationship satisfaction than those with low need for relationship control (Zak, Hunton, Kuhn, & Parks, 1997). Thus, extant research suggests that experiencing conflict is often a consequence of the attempt to exercise control in relationships.

Stets and collaborators have identified several correlates of control in relationships including lower trust, lower relationship commitment, higher conflict, inconsistent self-views, psychological aggression, and physical violence (Stets, 1995; Stets & Burke, 1994; 2005; Stets & Hammons, 2002; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987). Specifically, evidence supports a model in which identity conflicts and lack of environmental mastery lead to efforts to control the spouse or dating partner which, when unsuccessful, may eventuate in psychological abuse and physical violence.

Thus, research suggests that identity problems and poor relationship skills (e.g. relationship anxiety) are linked to control in relationships.

Stets and Hammons (2002) have also identified an important gender difference in the association between commitment and partner control. Specifically, partner control was reported to lower men's commitment to the relationship over time. By contrast, partner control was reported to increase women's commitment to the relationship over the course of three years. This pattern of results suggests that there is a gender difference in how men and women respond to partner control.

One of the other areas where control in relationships has been studied in its own right more extensively is marital locus of control. This limited focus began as a result of a concern that generalized measures of control (e.g. locus of control) do not predict relationship functioning. Marital locus of control is believed to be a personality characteristic that deals with people's beliefs as to whether their marital outcomes depend on their own efforts or on some outside force. Specifically, external marital locus of control individuals believe that their marital outcomes do not depend on their efforts but on chance and luck instead, whereas internal marital locus of control individuals believe that they control what happens in their marriage. External marital locus of control has been linked to low marital satisfaction, lack of intimacy, and low personal adjustment (Miller, Lefcourt, & Ware, 1983; Lucas & Peterson, 1991). Marital locus of control impacts marital satisfaction directly as well as indirectly, with problem solving skills mediating the relationship between internal locus of control and marital satisfaction (Miller, Lefcourt, Holmes, Ware, & Saleh, 1986). However, although the MMLOC is a valid and reliable measure, it should not

be used to measure control in relationships because its validity has not been established in that specification.

Another area that has received limited research attention is the role of relationship control in intra-couple violence and aggression. For example, lower levels of perceived control and desire for more control have both been linked to abuse in relationships (Prince & Arias, 1994; Paulhus, 1983). Furthermore, individuals who exhibit high need for relationship control have also been shown to blame their partners more after conflict and to report less satisfaction in romantic relationships (Zak et al., 1997). Control has also been linked to couple violence and that association was mediated by relationship quality (Gage & Hutchinson, 2006). Thus, intra-couple violence has been shown to occur when partners don't feel in control especially when control is very important to them otherwise.

To summarize, control has been conceptualized and measured in a variety of ways. However, remarkably little attention has been given to the role of control in romantic relationships beyond its relationship to aggression. Those articles that do discuss control in its own right find that controlling individuals tend to use control as means to boost their self-esteem (Kipnis, Castell, Gergen, & Mauch, 1976). Control has been reported to evolve in stages, with participants unconsciously comparing their actual and desired control at each stage, and more serious dating stages are usually marked by more control over the partner (Stets, 1993). High conflict, low trust, low mastery (self-efficacy), and more committed relationship stage have all been found to be predictors of control in relationships (Stets, 1993; 1995). Furthermore, Stets and Hammons (2002) have linked partner control to own commitment to the relationships,

with men becoming less committed to the relationships if their partner is controlling and women becoming more committed to the relationship when their partner exhibits control in relationships. However, beyond such scattered findings, the construct of relationship control has not been thoroughly nor systematically investigated.

The Present Research

In an attempt to address this issue, Naydenova and Jones (2007) developed a control in relationships scale that has good reliability and validity properties. The current study is a logical extension of our previous research. The present research outlines a program of research that will more clearly define and measure the construct of control in relationships. Specifically the goals of this research project include: (a) to further validate the Control in Relationships scale using a dyadic approach, (b) to further differentiate the control and power construct, and (c) to explore the role and the importance of the control construct in romantic relationships.

Overview of the Present Studies

Study 1. The above discussion suggests the need for additional research on the construct of control in relationships. The present study, therefore, seeks to assess control in relationships from a dyadic perspective. A secondary goal was to explore the association between all existing control and power measures in an effort to emphasize the conceptual and operating differences between the two constructs. The construct of power has been defined as the ability to get a desired outcome through intentional influence (Huston, 1983) or sometimes as the decision-making privileges in a relationship (Gray-Little et al., 1996; Quinn, 1988), the latter definition conceptually overlapping with the definition of control. Similarly to control in

relationships, power has been associated with negative relationship functioning. For example, there are usually negative effects that stem from the unequal distribution of power in the family such as impaired marital functioning and satisfaction (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Shared power has been associated with marital adjustment and a high rate of trust and positive experiences between the partners and low rate of defensiveness, withdrawal, and eventual divorce (Gottman, 1994).

The main objective of this project is to further validate the Control in Relationships scale using an interpersonal approach. An integrative review of the literature suggested that control in relationships is most frequently defined as an interpersonal construct (Naydenova & Jones, 2008). Thus, in order to assess the interpersonal dynamics of control in relationships we administered a questionnaire to University of Tennessee college students who have been in a romantic relationship for at least three months assessing partner and own influence on control and relationship satisfaction.

The secondary goal of this study was to explore the relationship between control in relationships and power. Based on early social psychological research, control is defined as the degree to which one partner abides by and succumbs to the control attempts of another. In the family studies literature, one of the major differences between power and control has been the presence of conflict. In the only paper that attempts to delineate the similarities between power and control, the two concepts are said to be interchangeable terms within the family unit only when there is conflict involved (Rollins & Bahr, 1976). Thus, in the present research we compare and contrast the two constructs.

Study 2. The second study examines the association between control, relationship satisfaction and commitment over a period of three months. The main goal of the second study was to explore the longitudinal properties of the constructs. Based on available research, we expected that commitment and satisfaction would decline over time as the relationship progresses and that there will be a gender difference in satisfaction as a function of control: high CIR women at Time 1 will report the highest decline in satisfaction as compared to all the other groups of participants.

A secondary goal of the current research was to examine the association between CIR and actual behavioral measure of control as measured by control ratings by two independent judges of a control narrative that was solicited from the participants. We expected that CIR rating would be significantly correlated with actual control behavior as reported by the participants.

CHAPTER II

Study I: Dyadic Assessment of Control in Relationships

Overview and Purpose

Dyads. We expected that own perception is more predictive of expected partner ratings than partner's actual ratings. For example, one's own rating of control in relationships will be significantly related to expected ratings from partner (e.g. perceived similarity on control), irrespective of the ratings the partner actually gives (e.g. actual similarity on control).

We also examined the association between relationship satisfaction and control. Based on research done with the CIR and other instruments, we expected that control in relationships would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. However, in the present study we also sought to examine the associations between control and relationship satisfaction in the dyad. Previous research on commitment and control in relationships (Stets & Hammons, 2002) has found that partner control is a better predictor of commitment than own control. Specifically, wives' control was associated with husband's lower committed to the relationship and husband's control was linked to wives higher committed to the relationship. We assessed whether these associations apply to college dating couples and can also be used to explain the dynamics between control and relationship satisfaction.

In the present research, we also assess the association between relationship length and control in relationships. Based on extant research, we expected that ratings of control in relationships would be the highest in couples who have been together for an average length of time as opposed to couples who are in the beginning or later

stages of their relationships. We theorized that couples that are in the early stages of their relationship haven't usually faced major relationship problems so there may be no need to exhibit relationship control. Similarly, partners that have been together for a longer time may have their relationship and control dynamics already established, so they may not feel the need to exert control over the relationship.

Other Control and Power Scales. Based on the available literature and previous research on the CIR, we expected CIR to be inversely associated with efficacy expectations. This prediction was based on the knowledge that CIR has already been positively associated with risk of intimacy and negatively with hardiness in addition to the relationship anxiety properties of CIR. Based on the psychometric properties and previous concurrent validation of CIR, we also expected CIR to be positively associated with all measures of power and control such as Stet's control measure, ISRS, and the power satisfaction measures. Ronfeldt's power measure was reported to have low construct validity and its concurrent validity is unavailable in the literature, therefore we did not make any predictions as to its association with CIR. As a result of the mixed evidence on the subject, we also had no specific predictions as to the relationships between CIR and Miller's marital locus of control (MMLOC; Miller, Lefcourt & Ware, 1983) at the dyadic level and for both men and women. Because there was no reliable association between CIR and any more general locus of control measures used in previous studies, we could not predict the nature of the association between CIR and the more contextualized MMLOC. In previous studies, internal locus of control individuals have been shown to exercise greater control in relationships, as a means to ensure that relationship stability and satisfaction (Miller

et al., 1983; Miller et al., 1986). However, internals have also been shown to have more constructive communication, success at achieving their goals in the relationship and higher relationship satisfaction as compared to externals, which are all uncharacteristic of individuals who desire or exercise control in relationships.

Method

Participants

The participants were 81 undergraduate students recruited from psychology courses who came to the lab with their romantic partner. Their partner did not have to be a University of Tennessee student. Participants made appointments through a human participation in research website in exchange for nominal course credit. The mean age of the respondents was 20.52 years for men (range 17-39; $SD = 2.64$) and 19.66 for women (range 15-32, $SD = 2.29$). Approximately 64 % of the men were white, 16.3 % were African American and 4.2 % identified themselves as another ethnicity. The remaining 16.3 % of the men did not indicate an ethnicity. Similarly, 61.6 % of the women were white, 16.3 % indicated they are black, 5.8 % belonged to another ethnicity and 16.3 % chose not to indicate their ethnicity.

Procedure

All participants came to a laboratory with their romantic partner. Upon arrival, the participants and their partners provided their informed consent for the study. Next, the participants and their partners were instructed to sit apart from each other and were given an identical questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four copies of the CIR. In randomized order the participants and their partner completed the scale from each of the four perspectives: a) self-ratings, b) ratings of the partner, c)

expected ratings from the partner and d) expected ratings that partner will apply to himself or herself. In addition to the four versions of the CIR, each partner also completed the Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale (Miller, Lefcourt & Ware, 1983), Norton's Quality of Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983), a power perception and power satisfaction measure (Ronfeldt, Kimerling & Arias, 1998), the Sexual Relationship Power Scale (Pulerwitz, Gortmaker & DeJong, 2000), Stet's Control Scale (Stets, 1995) and an efficacy expectations measure (Bradbury, 1989).

Measures

Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale (Miller et al., 1983) is a 44-item scale presented in a 6-point Likert format verbally anchored with labels such as *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (6). The scale consists of two 22-item subscales that measure internal and external marital locus of control respectively. Miller defines people with internal marital locus of control as being active agents in their marriage and having the skills to achieve their goals and be effective problem-solvers in the marital context. By contrast, husbands and wives with an external locus of control believe that their marriage is controlled by outside forces or events beyond their control. Internal marital locus of control has been associated with higher intimacy and marital satisfaction. Miller reported the internal consistency of the overall measure to be .83 ($\alpha = .84$ for husbands and $\alpha = .82$ for wives) and the scale has been validated on a number of occasions. Example items of the scale are "I can always bring about a reconciliation when my husband and I argue" for internal locus of control and "I am often at a loss as to what to say or do when I'm in a disagreement with my husband"

representing external locus of control. In the present study none of the participants were married so the scale was reworded to reflect dating instead marital relationships.

Norton's Quality of Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983) is a six-item measure of marital satisfaction. Five of the items were written for a seven-point Likert-type response format with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The sixth item requires the participant to answer the question "All things considered, how happy are you in your marriage?" on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 corresponds to *very unhappy* and 10 corresponds to *perfectly happy*. In the analyses, the sixth item was scored separately from the other five, which were scored cumulatively. The internal consistency of this overall measure was .94 (Neff & Karney, 2005). Higher scores on the scale reflect greater marital satisfaction. An example item of the scale is "We have a good marriage." Because none of the participants were married, we reworded some items so they pertained to dating partners instead of spouses as in the original version. Thus, in our version of the scale the sample item cited above was changed to "We have a good relationship". The scale has been widely used in the close relationship literature and linked to partners' positive behavior and responsibility attributions among others (McNulty & Karney, 2004).

Stet's Control Measure (Stets, 1995) is a 10-item measure specifically designed to assess control in relationships. The scale is verbally anchored by *never* (1) and *very often* (5) with a high score indicating higher control. Stets has reported *omega* reliability of .87. A sample item is "I make him/her do what I want". The scale has been correlated with psychological aggression, lack of perspective taking

ability, conflict and less partner trust. This is the only existing published scale of control in relationships other than the CIR.

Sexual Relationship Power Scale (SRPS; Pulerwitz et al., 2000) is a 28-item measure of relationship power dynamics that is comprised of 2 separate subscales that are first scored independently and then subsequently combined – the Relationship Control subscale, which consists of 15 items on a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (4) and the Decision-Making Subscale, which consists of 8 questions with a response format limited to *your partner* (1), *both of you equally* (2), and *you* (3). High scores on the scale represent high sexual relationship power. The scale has good internal reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and has been inversely associated with relationship violence and education. Example items of the scale are “Most of the time we do what my partner wants to do” for the relationship control subscale and “Who usually has more to say about what you do together?” representing the decision-making dominance subscale. The scale was initially written for women as the only intended respondents. Therefore, for the purposes of this study some of the items were rewritten so both men and women can answer the items. However, three of the items could not be meaningfully reworded in order for men to answer them (e.g. If I asked my partner to use a condom, he will get violent). Therefore, we left those three items separate from the others and we instructed only women to complete them. As a result of this modification, the scale that men completed comprised of 25 items and the scale for women consisted of 28 items.

Perceived relationship power and power satisfaction (Ronfeldt et al., 1998) is a 10-item measure that independently assesses individual's relationship power and satisfaction with the arrangement. Individual perception of power was measured in two separate ways. Responses on the first three items were obtained on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *my partner has much more to say* (1) to *I have much more to say* (4) and responses on the last two items were verbally anchored with *my partner* (1) and *me* (4). Higher scores represent higher relationship power for the individual. The power satisfaction responses were rendered on a 4-point Likert format ranging from *very dissatisfied* (1) to *very satisfied* (4). The scale met conventional standards of reliability. The perceived power subscale has reported Cronbach Alpha of .62 and the power satisfaction subscale has a reported Cronbach Alpha of .74. An example item of the scale is "Who do you think generally decides what you and your partner do together?"

Bradbury's *Efficacy Expectations* (Fincham, Harold, & Gano-Phillips, 2000) is a 7-item measure that assesses the extent to which a spouse believes that he or she can successfully resolve a conflict with his/her partner. High scores reflect higher efficacy expectations and an example item of the scale is "I am able to do things needed to settle our conflicts". Although the original measure has not been published, it has been used in a variety of studies and it has been inversely associated with the amount of anger displayed by both husband and wives during problem solving. In the current study, coefficient alpha was high ($\alpha = .80$ for men and $\alpha = .83$ for women). We chose to include this particular measure in the study because it has been

conceptualized as a type of control in relationships measure (e.g. control over conflict).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 (All tables and figures are in the appendix) presents means and standard deviations of all the different perspectives of control and marital satisfaction for both men and women. As shown in the table, men reported higher perceived control in relationships than women for each perspective. Using a repeated measures ANOVA, we assessed whether level of reported control in the 4 relationships perspectives significantly differed from one another. Based on the paired analyses, the level of reported control in relationships in each relationship significantly differed from the level of control in each of the other relationships for both men and women (Pillai's Trace = .23, $F = 7.34$, $p < .01$ for men Pillai's Trace = .12, $F = 3.63$, $p < .05$ for women). Specifically, for both men and women participants reported control in relationships was the highest when it came to partner perceptions or the way the participant perceives his/her partner is going to rate him or her, and control in relationship was the lowest when it came to participants' own ratings for men and partner ratings for women. The skewness and kurtosis indices indicated that the data was normally distributed with the exception of men's QMI, where we found an outlier (4 SD above the mean), which was subsequently eliminated from the data. A paired sample t -test was used to determine if there is a significant difference between men and women's ratings of control. The results indicated that although men reported significantly higher control than women in all 4 relationship perspectives as indicated

by the means that difference did not reach statistical significance for any perspective ($t(77) = .91$, *ns* for own control; $t(79) = 1.27$, *ns* for partner control; $t(79) = 1.65$, *ns* for partner perception; and $t(80) = 1.08$, *ns* for partner perception of own control).

This is inconsistent with previous research using CIR in which men reported significantly higher control in relationships. However, it has to be noted that historically research done with the CIR was individual and this was the first study in which participants filled the questionnaire in the presence (albeit separately) of their partner.

Reported Own and Partner Control in Relationships and Satisfaction

As presented in Table 2, at the dyadic level, average own control on the CIR was inversely related to average relationship satisfaction ($r = -.37$, $p < .01$). Similarly, average perceived partner control (e.g. the my rating of my partner control) was also inversely related to average relationship satisfaction ($r = -.45$, $p < .01$). All the variables were normally distributed and although both men and women's scores on own relationship satisfaction were high for women ($M = 30.60$, $SD = 5.1$) and for men ($M = 29.13$, $SD = 6.12$) both variables had the properties of a univariate normal distribution. These high scores on relationship satisfaction are consistent with other research done with college couples. Furthermore, the high scores on relationship satisfaction are also consistent with the nature of romantic relationships in college; where in general there are more alternatives than during other committed relationships and only very satisfied couples are motivated to stay in the relationship (Weiselquist, Rusbult, Foster & Agnew, 1999). In general, although women reported

slightly higher relationship satisfaction than men, this difference did not reach significance ($t(80) = 1.16, ns$).

Next, we compared the association between own control, partner control and own relationship satisfaction. We expected that partner's control rather than own control would be more strongly associated with relationship satisfaction. We observed the expected pattern of results for women, but not for men. Men's reported own control was positively related to women's reported own control ($r = .39, p < .01$) and men's reported own control was significantly inversely related to own relationship satisfaction ($r = -.36, p < .01$). This is consistent with research suggesting the control in relationships is associated with negative outcomes for the individual and the relationship and is inversely related with relationship satisfaction. As seen in Figure 1, there is significant relationship between men's reported own control in relationships and men's satisfaction, whereas there seems to be no identifiable pattern linking women's reported own control and men's relationship satisfaction ($r = -.24, ns$). By contrast, as shown in Figure 2, men's own control was positively related to women's relationship satisfaction ($r = .48, p < .01$), and women's own control was inversely related to women's relationship satisfaction ($r = -.58, p < .01$). In other words, as presented in the bubble plot in Figure 3, the higher the woman's own control is, the less she is satisfied with the relationship. However, the higher their partner's control is, the more satisfied women report themselves to be. This pattern of results is consistent with our expectations and provides us with an insight into the operating characteristic of control in relationships. It is consistent with previous research exploring the relationships between commitment and relationship

control done with married couples, which suggests that high women's control was negatively associated with own and partner's commitment to the relationship, however high partner's control was positively correlated with women's commitment to the relationship (Stets & Hammons, 2002).

Next, we examined the relationship between partner control (e.g. my ratings of my partner's control) and own relationship satisfaction at the individual level. As indicated in Table 3, the correlations indicated that men's ratings of perceived partner control were inversely related to their own relationship satisfaction ($r = -.30, p < .01$). However, there was an unreliable relationship between women's ratings of perceived partner control and men's relationship satisfaction. For women, the relationship between their reported partner control and their relationship satisfaction did not reach significance ($r = -.23, ns$).

Partner Perception of Self and the Partner

Finally, we examined the relationship between partner's perceptions of partner and own control and relationship satisfaction. As presented in Table 2, at the dyadic level, partner perception of partner control was inversely associated with average relationship satisfaction ($r = -.32, p < .01$) and partner perception of own control was also inversely related to average relationship satisfaction at the dyadic level ($r = -.42, p < .01$). Furthermore, consistent with previous results if men expected that their partner will rate herself as high on control, that was inversely related to their own relationship satisfaction ($r = -.33, p < .01$), and if men expected that their partners' will rate them as controlling, that was also negatively related to their relationship satisfaction although to a lesser degree ($r = -.25, p < .05$). For women, the

expectations that their partner will rate himself as in control of the relationship was inversely related to their own QMI ($r = -.48, p < .01$) and their partner perceptions of them as controlling was also negatively associated with their relationship satisfaction ($r = -.50, p < .01$). Therefore, it appears that people seem to associate control from them or their partner with relationship problems and dissatisfaction. Interestingly, all the results taken together suggest women are more satisfied when their partners control the relationship, yet they are dissatisfied when they expect their partners to rate themselves as being in control of the relationship. This is suggestive of the fact that control in relationships is a sensitive issue in relationships and both partners usually want some level of control in their relationship.

Actual Similarity and Perceived Similarity

Actual similarity on control is the correlation of self-perceptions on the CIR for both partners. Perceived similarity is the congruence between partner's self-ratings on CIR and the participants' ratings for their partners. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison involved in operationalizing the variables, actual similarity, perceived similarity, understanding and reciprocity. Each relationship pair has a score on individual perceived similarity, understanding and reciprocity (one from each member of the dyad distinguished by gender), and a dyadic perceived similarity and understanding (the average for both partners perceived similarity correlations). As seen in Table 4, results indicated that the average correlation for actual similarity at the dyadic level ($r = .39, p < .01$) was lower than the average correlation for perceived similarity ($r = .58, p < .01$). This is consistent with research done on the difference between actual and perceived similarity in relationships suggesting that

relationship partners tend to perceive themselves to be more similar than they are in reality (Hebb, 2004). Furthermore, the reported perceived similarity for men ($r = .76$, $p < .01$) was higher than perceived similarity for women ($r = .54$, $p < .01$).

Next, analyses investigated whether actual similarity and perceived similarity significantly differed from each at both the dyadic and the individual level. In order to assess the difference of the actual and perceived similarity correlations, we did not utilize the traditional r to z transformation, because the correlations are dependent. Therefore, we must take into account this lack of independence and incorporate a term representing the degree to which the two tests are themselves correlated.¹

As presented in Table 4, the results indicated that at the dyadic level, average actual similarity on the CIR was significantly different, albeit marginally, from average perceived similarity on the CIR ($t = 1.48$, $p < .06$). In other words, partners perceived themselves to be more similar on control in relationships than they really are. For men, there was a significant difference between actual and perceived similarity on control ($t = 3.46$, $p < .01$) and for women that difference was not statistically significant ($t = 1.14$, *ns*). Thus, men perceive themselves to be closer in ratings on control to their partner than they are in reality. For women, this relationship was unreliable, which is consistent with research that suggests that women are more

Hotelling's (1940) proposed the traditional solution but a better test was developed by Williams. In the current study, we utilized Williams' formula that has been endorsed by Steiger (1980). Below is the formula:

$$t = \frac{(r_{12} - r_{13})\sqrt{(N-1)(1+r_{23})/2\sqrt{[(N-1)/(N-3)]|R|} + (r_{12} + r_{13})^2/4(1-r_{23})^2}}{\sqrt{(1 - r_{12}^2 - r_{13}^2 - r_{23}^2) + (2r_{12}r_{13}r_{23})}}$$

$$\text{Where } |R| = (1 - r_{12}^2 - r_{13}^2 - r_{23}^2) + (2r_{12}r_{13}r_{23})$$

realistic when it comes to relationship dynamics (Rubin, Peplau & Hill, 1981). Furthermore, women might be more realistic in their perceptions of control dynamics in the relationship because historically women had less control and power in both relationships and society. Research on procedural justice suggests that minority groups who are usually disadvantaged when it comes to control, have a more realistic perception to control dynamics in society. For the majority, who has always had control, control dynamics are less relevant (Azzi & Jost, 1994).

We ran a Mixed Model analysis with relationships satisfaction and gender as fixed variables in order to see if average actual control at the dyadic level is predicted by both gender and average relationship satisfaction at the dyadic level. The results indicated that gender was not a reliable predictor of CIR ($B = -.23, ns$). However, average relationship satisfaction at the dyadic level was a significant predictor of average actual control at the dyadic level ($B = -.92, p < .01$). As expected, the results indicate that the higher average control level in the couple, the lower the satisfaction at the dyadic level. It has to be noted that the results of the mixed model analysis as to the relationship between gender and CIR were consistent with the t-test results discussed above. In contrast with previous studies, in the current study we did not identify gender as a predictor of control in relationships.

Understanding and Reciprocity

Understanding was operationalized by comparing participant's ratings of own CIR with their partner's ratings of other CIR. Reciprocity is conceptualized as the association between both participants' ratings of the other on CIR. As with actual similarity and perceived similarity, Figure 1 illustrates the comparison involved in

operationalizing the variables. As shown in Table 5, results indicated that the reported understanding of the partner was similar for both men and women ($r = .46, p < .01$ for men and $r = .41, p < .01$ for women). Reciprocity can only be assessed at the dyadic level. The association for reciprocity of control in the couple was also significant ($r = .27, p < .02$). Results indicated that there is a marginally significant relationship between understanding for men and their reciprocity of control in the relationship in that men reported higher partner understanding than reciprocity in control ($t = 1.66, p < .05$). For women, the difference between the two correlations was not significant ($t = .98, ns$).

Relationship Length

Stets has reported that control in relationships is associated with relationship length. Therefore, we explored the relationship between actual similarity, perceived similarity, understanding in relation to the length of the relationship. Participants were divided into three groups. The participants who were in the shortest 25% were those who have been in a relationship for less than 4 months ($N = 20$ for both men and women), those who were in the longest 25% has been in a relationship for more than 19 months ($N = 18$ for women and $N = 17$ for men) and those in the middle 50 % ($N = 37$ for women, $N = 38$ for men).

Short Relationship Length. Next, we assessed actual similarity in relation to the length of the relationship. We assessed the mean ratings on the CIR for new relationships ($M = 64.35, SD = 16.97$ for men and $M = 62.89, SD = 19.65$ for women). At the dyadic level for couples that have been together for less than 4 months, there was a significant correlation between the partners for actual similarity

on control ($r = .49, p < .05$). For this group of participants, perceived similarity for men on control in relationships was very high ($r = .81, p < .01$), whereas for women it was not significantly different than zero ($r = .04, ns$). Using the formula discussed above for assessing the difference between dependant correlations, we found that the between group comparison for men and women revealed that men perceived more similarity with their partner on control than their partner ($t = 2.15, p < .01$). Level of understanding of their partner's level of control for new couples was significant for both men ($r = .52, p < .03$) and women ($r = .56, p < .01$). The between group comparison revealed that there was no gender difference in level of understanding of partner control ($t = .04, ns$). The level of reciprocity of control was non-significant for these couples ($r = .41, ns$).

Long Relationship Length. The number of couples that have been together for more than 19 months was 19 couples. The average length of the relationship for these couples was 38.84, and the range was 19-120 months). The partners in this category had pretty high ratings on the CIR ($M = 63.12, SD = 16.48$ for men and $M = 61.12, SD = 17.12$ for women). When we analyzed the association between actual similarity ($r = .16, ns$) and understanding ($r = .46, p < .05$ for men and $r = .26, ns$ for women), the difference between the two associations was not significantly different than zero. Furthermore, reciprocity at the dyadic level was also not significantly different than zero ($r = .26, ns$). However, perceived similarity for both men and women was significant ($r = .55, p < .02$ for both men and women). The difference between actual and perceived similarity was non-significant ($t = 1.25, ns$).

Taken together, these findings suggest that control in relationship is a less important predictor of relationship dynamics for these couples. This pattern of results is consistent with the explanation that as the relationship progresses men and women become better judges of their partners' behavior and motivations, so issues of control are less salient in the relationships (Stets & Hammons, 2002). An alternative explanation might be that due to the restricted range of CIR in these analyses, the majority of correlations were unreliable. Future research is needed to further explore the properties of control couples, which have been together longer.

Average Length Relationships. The number of couples that fell into that category was 41. The length of the relationship for these couples was $M = 8.49$ for women ($SD = 4.76$, range 4-18) and $M = 8.01$ for men, ($SD = 4.69$, range 4 - 18). The average ratings on the CIR for these couples were 70.57 for women and 71.45 for men. The average similarity in control in relationships was high ($r = .45$, $p < .01$) and perceived similarity in control was high for men ($r = .45$, $p < .01$) and to a lesser extent for women ($r = .36$, $p < .02$). There was not a significant difference between actual and perceived similarity in control for neither men nor women. Reciprocity in control for these couples was not significantly different than zero ($r = .14$, ns). Understanding for these couples was significant ($r = .45$, $p < .01$ for men and $r = .36$, $p = .02$ for women).

Power and Control Measures

Correlations at the Dyadic Level. First we looked at the correlations between the different power and control measures at the dyadic level. As shown in Table 6, CIR was significantly related to the majority power and control measures. However,

as expected, CIR was not redundant when compared to any of the extant control and power measures. Therefore, despite the fact that control and power are often operationalized and conceptualized as identical constructs in the literature, the correlations between the different control and power measures indicated that control in relationships and power are related but different constructs. Notably, contrary to our predictions there was a negative correlation between CIR and ISRS ($r = -.26, p < .01$). CIR was also significantly associated with internal MMLOC ($r = .44, p < .01$), and alternately to a lesser extent negatively associated with external MMLOC ($r = .23, p < .05$). This pattern of results confirms the relational properties of MMLOC, which is the only locus of control measure that is associated with CIR, but also provides more information as to the construct properties of control in relationships. In other words, individuals who prefer to control their relationship also tend to have more internal locus of control, which is consistent with the conceptualization of these individuals as perceiving outcomes in the relationship as under being in their control and exerting control in an effort to improve the relationship.

As expected Stet's control, which is one of the two existing measures specifically designed to assess control in relationships and the only measure that has been published in the literature, was significantly correlated with CIR ($r = .48, p < .01$), which supports the concurrent validity of CIR. Furthermore, the correlational results at the dyadic level also revealed that as expected, CIR was inversely related to the Efficacy measure, which assesses perceived competence to successfully solve control issues with the partner ($r = .48, p < .01$). This relationship adds to the evidence from previous studies using the CIR that suggest that control in relationships

is strongly associated with relationship anxiety and poor relationships skills and inversely associated with perceived hardiness, self-efficacy and mastery. There was no reliable association between CIR and Dominance ($r = .12, ns$). CIR was inversely related to power satisfaction ($r = -.39, p < .01$). This pattern of results is similar to Stets' conceptualization of control in relationships (Stets & Burke, 2005) based on identity control theory that states that one exerts control over their partner in order to regain the perception of control over their environment, when their perceived control has been challenged or threatened. Therefore, if one is dissatisfied with one's perceived power over the partner, it follows that one will be taking steps (e.g. exerting control in relationships) to regain one's power.

The last association we examined at the dyadic level was between CIR and power perception and the relationship between the two variables was unreliable ($r = .15, ns$). This finding is consistent with Ronfledt and colleagues conceptualization of power perception as an unreliable measure of power dynamics in the relationship. Furthermore, an alternate explanation for the non-significant correlations might be due to the weak psychometric properties of power perception (Cronbach's alpha = .51 in the current sample).

Correlations at the Individual Level. For men and women, the pattern of correlations between power and control measures exhibited different properties (see Tables 7 and 8). However, the major trends remained the same for both sexes. For example, efficacy expectations were inversely related to CIR for both men and women ($r = -.44, p < .01$ for men and $r = -.25, p < .01$ for women). ISRS and CIR were also inversely related for both men and women ($r = -.25, p < .01$ for men and r

= -.26, $p < .01$ for women). However, CIR and ISRS' dominance subscale were positively correlated for men ($r = .31, p < .01$), whereas the two variables did not have a reliable association for women ($r = .11, ns$). The associations between power perception and CIR were unreliable for both men and women ($r = .15, ns$ for men and $r = .02, ns$ for women). One of the major differences, however, in the correlations at the individual level occurred in the association between CIR and power satisfaction. For women CIR was significantly associated with dissatisfaction with power ($r = -.39, p < .01$), whereas the relationship between the two measures was not reliable for men ($r = -.12, ns$). This may be due to the fact that men, in general, have the majority power in society and in relationships, so they don't perceive much dissatisfaction with power and they might exert control for other reasons. Women, on the other hand, often may experience dissatisfaction with power in the relationship and they may become motivated to exert control in order to regain more power and make the relationship more egalitarian. This explanation is consistent with research on the subject (Stets, 1991, 1993). Another correlation that had different properties for men and women was between CIR and external MMLOC. Specifically, CIR was modestly inversely related to external MMLOC ($r = -.23, p < .01$) whereas this relationship is unreliable for men ($r = -.10, ns$).

Regression Analyses

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to determine which variables best predicted relationship satisfaction for both men and women. For women, after examining the correlations between all the control and power measures and relationship satisfaction, we decided to enter internal locus of control as the first step

of the hierarchical regression, followed by CIR and the power satisfaction scale. As indicated in Table 9, CIR was the second largest unique predictor of all relationship satisfaction after Internal Marital Locus of Control and the model accounted for 52 % of the variance in women's relationship satisfaction. When interpreting this pattern of results, it is important to note that MMLOC is different conceptually than all the other scales in the study because it is defined as a personality characteristics as compared to the rest of the scales are designed to measure relationship control and power as a dyadic process. In other words, own CIR is a better predictor of relationship satisfaction for women than any of the extant relationship control and/or power measures. This pattern of results further emphasizes that CIR is the most relational of the control measures and a better predictor of relationship functioning than any of the existing relevant control and power instruments. Thus, there seems to be a need in the literature for a new control scale that focuses specifically on relationship issues.

For men, own control was not a reliable predictor of relationship satisfaction. Instead, internal locus of control and efficacy expectations were the largest predictors of men's relationships satisfaction.

At the dyadic level internal locus of control and efficacy were the two largest predictors of relationship satisfaction. It is important to note that partner control was the third largest predictor of dyads relationship satisfaction, which is consistent with our expectations and confirms the pattern of results from the current study, which suggests that in particular women's relationship satisfaction is influenced more by their partner level of control than by own control (*Figure 3*).

Discussion

Interpersonal Assessment of Control in Relationships

As expected, participants perceived themselves to be more similar to their partner when it comes to the amount of control they exert than in reality. In other words, men's perceived similarity on control with their partner was significantly higher than the actual control similarity. This discrepancy between perceptions and reality is consistent with our predictions and with previous research comparing actual and perceived similarity (Hebb, 2004). This finding is also consistent with research by Middleton & Putney (1960) on perceived similarity in control in dyads, which suggests that the majority of people report that they are in an egalitarian relationship (e.g. relationship where partners equally share control in relationships), whereas this is less often the case.

There was a notable gender difference in the results. Specifically, only men rated themselves to more similar to their partner than in reality. This association was not statistically significant for women. Men's unrealistic partner perception has been a subject of previous research, which has noted that men tend to fall in love more readily than women and in general, be less attentive to relationship problems and be in general less socially sensitive and less attuned to non-verbal communication than women (Rubin *et al*, 1981; Hall, 1978).

Another potential explanation for this pattern of results comes from two complementary theories, Resource Theory and Procedural Justice Theory. Resource Theory suggests that because women have historically had fewer resources at their disposal (e.g. money, control in relationships) than men, they tend to strive to be

equal to men so they are particularly attuned to control in relationships dynamics or any other distribution of resources dynamics in their relationship. Furthermore, related research on procedural justice suggests that women, because of history of being subject to discrimination and disadvantage, tend to mistrust relationships and be very attuned to any relationship dynamics. Thus, they tend to have a more realistic perception of control dynamics in the relationship because control dynamics are more relevant to them than to men, who historically have possessed greater control both at the societal level and at the level of personal relationships (Azzi & Jost, 1994). In any case, our results suggest that women, in general, are better judges of relationship functioning than men.

CIR and Relationship Satisfaction. Consistent with our expectations and previous research using the CIR, our results indicated that own control in relationships is inversely correlated with own relationship satisfaction. However, the dyadic nature of this study allowed us to examine how each partner's control relates to own and partner relationship satisfaction. Results indicated that there is significant positive relationship between men's reported own control in relationships and men's satisfaction, whereas there seems to be no identifiable pattern linking partner's reported own control and men's relationship satisfaction. This suggests that men are more satisfied in a relationship when they are in control and the control level exerted by their partner does not have a significant effect on men's relationship satisfaction. By contrast, women's own relationship satisfaction was positively associated with partner's ratings of control in relationships and negatively correlated with own control. This finding confirms once again that women are better attuned to

relationship dynamics and their behavior is significantly influenced by the partner's self-perceived control. What is noteworthy, however, is that women seem to prefer that their partners are in control of the relationship and dislike when they are the ones who have control in the relationship. A similar finding has been reported by Stets and Hammons (2002) who have suggested that men's commitment to the relationship was lessened by their partner's control, yet women's commitment was strengthened by men's control in relationships. This finding is also consistent with extant research on control in relationships that suggests that male-dominated relationships lead to highest relationship satisfaction for both men and women (Grey-Little & Burks, 1983). Stets has hypothesized that self-verification can explain that pattern of results. For example, women tend to be less powerful in society so if husbands behave in a manner that confirms the way women perceive themselves, that will lead to greater interconnectedness and relationship satisfaction for both partners (Stets & Hammons, 2002). An alternative explanation can be that women do not have much experience historically being controlling in relationships and in society, so when they have the greater control it leads them to be more distressed than men, who are used to and prefer to be in control of the relationship. However, all above-mentioned explanations of the results are limited by speculation. Further research is needed to clarify the association between men's control, women's control and own relationship satisfaction.

CIR and Relationship Length. The present research confirmed Stet's findings (1991, 1993) that highest CIR scores are associated with average relationship length. Stets pointed out that relationship in the beginning stages often don't experience

enough conflict or problems so that a partner feels the need to exhibit control in relationships. Similarly, established relationships, where trust and control dynamics have already been decided also tend not to show signs of control in relationships problems. Thus, partners in average length relationships tend to experience the most conflict as a result of control in relationships. However, in later research Stets has also associated high CIR scores with more serious relationships, stating that control has a curvilinear relationship with relationship length and it's low in the beginning and later stages of relationships, but high in the middle stages of relationships. We further assessed the relationship between control in relationships and relationship length using a longitudinal method in Study 2.

Control vs. Power in Relationships

A comparison of all available power and control scales allowed us to examine the differences between the two constructs. The most common definition of power is the ability to exert influence in the relationships and control is often conceptualized as the behavioral outcome of power. At the dyadic level, control in relationships was most strongly associated with other control constructs (e.g. Stet's Control, Internal MMLOC and efficacy control). Therefore, CIR was most strongly correlated with other measures that assess decision-making rather than influence in the relationship. Control in relationships was also associated, albeit less strongly, with the majority of power measures. This pattern of results confirms that conceptualization of control in relationships as a behavioral measure that focuses on the decision-making dynamics in the relationship.

The results of the current study were consistent with our predictions with one notable exception. CIRR was inversely correlated with one of comparison power measures (e.g. SRPS). This negative correlation might be at least partially explained by the response format of the SRPS relationship control subscale, which was verbally anchored in *strongly agree* (1) and *strongly disagree* (4), which was the exact opposite response pattern of the majority of scales in the questionnaire, which could have been misleading and confusing to the participants. Another potential reason for the negative relationship between the two measures is that the relationship control subscale focuses on control as primarily defined by sexual dominance and it is possible that college students do not conceptualize control in these terms. In any case, the association between CIR and the other control and power measures provided evidence of the robust concurrent validity properties of the CIR and the operating characteristics of control in relationships.

The results of the regression analyses revealed that control measures rather than power measures were the best predictors of relationship satisfaction. Internal marital locus of control was the best predictor of relationship satisfaction at the dyadic level and for both men and women at the individual level. Notably, CIR was the second best predictor of relationships satisfaction for women, which is suggestive of the robust relational properties of CIR. This pattern of results further emphasizes that CIR is the most relational of the control measures (with the exception of MMLOC) and a better predictor of relationship functioning than any of the existing relevant control and power instruments.

In summary, the results taken together, confirm the conceptualization of control as a behavioral construct associated with decision-making in the relationships rather than influence in the relationship (e.g. power) and also suggest that control may be more relational than power and control dynamics may be more relevant to relationship satisfaction and functioning than power dynamics in the relationship.

CHAPTER III

Study 2: Longitudinal Assessment Of Control In Relationships

Expected Findings and Purpose

In study 2, we aimed to further assess the association between control and relationship functioning constructs such as relationship satisfaction and commitment from a longitudinal perspective. Furthermore, in the present study we examined in more detail the relationship between control and length of the relationship. Last, we assessed the association between actual behavior and ratings on the CIR in order to further validate the CIR instrument.

Based on longitudinal research, Stets has demonstrated that control in relationships tends to decrease as the relationship progresses and theoretically partners become more accepting of one another (Stets, 2002). On the other hand, research has also suggested that higher control in relationships has also been associated with more serious relationships, which tend to be longer in their duration (Stets, 1991, 1995). In the current study, we sought to assess the temporal change in control ratings as measured by the CIR over a three-month period. We expected CIR ratings to be more strongly correlated with more serious relationships because in such relationships partners have more invested in both their partner and the relationship, hence more reasons to exhibit control. However, we were also interested in examining whether CIR scores tended to decrease over time within each relationship, as participants become more trusting of the other and they become less inclined to monitor and direct the other.

Consequently, we examined the association between control and commitment. Extant theory and research has suggested that commitment to the spouse declines over the course of a marriage (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985). For example, commitment has been reported to steadily decrease in the first three years of marriage for wives and decrease from the first to the third year for husbands (Stets & Hammons, 2002). We wanted to test this association in the context of college dating relationships and we predicted that commitment to the relationship would decrease over time for both men and women. We also expected that control and commitment to the relationship will be inversely correlated considering previous research done with CIR, which suggests that the presence of control issues in the relationships is associated with detrimental processes in the relationship and with decreased ratings on relationship satisfaction and increased feelings of jealousy, loneliness and other less than desirable emotional experiences (Naydenova & Jones, 2009). Furthermore, we examined the association between commitment and control in more detail. For example, we tested the association between CIR and the three factors that underlie the commitment construct, predicting that CIR will be negatively correlated with each of the commitment dimensions. Furthermore, we tested whether the association between commitment and control will change for high control individuals (high CIR scores) versus low control individuals (low CIR scores) without making specific predictions.

We also examined the association between control and relationship satisfaction. Based on previous research using the CIR, we expected CIR to be inversely related to relationship satisfaction as measured by the QMI. Furthermore, we expected relationship satisfaction, similarly to commitment, to decline over time

for all individuals but we expected that this decline to be strongest for high control women (e.g. high CIR scores). We made this prediction based on Study 1 results and extant research that suggests that women's satisfaction is negatively affected if women perceive themselves to be in control of the relationship (Stets & Hammons, 2002).

Finally, we expected CIR scores to be associated with actual behavior as measured by own control ratings by two independent judges of participants' narratives. Specifically, we expected CIR to be correlated with own control as presented in the narrative account at both Time 1 and Time 2. We also expected the seriousness of the conflict presented in the narrative account to be associated with CIR, as control in relationships has been shown to be associated with serious relationship conflict (Zak, 1997).

Method

Participants

The participants completed a questionnaire on two separate occasions. Three hundred and sixty five students completed the questionnaire at Time 1. The mean age of the respondents at Time 1 was 19.73 years (range 17-35; $SD = 2.07$).

Approximately 43 % of the participants were men ($N = 156$) and 57 % of the participants were women ($N = 209$). Next, the same group of participants completed a questionnaire three months later. Two hundred and ninety-six participants completed the questionnaire at Time 2. The final sample was comprised of 130 men (44 %) and 166 women (56 %). The mean age was 19.84 (range 17-35, $SD = 2.17$). The study had an 81 % retention rate.

Procedure

Participants completed two online control in relationships questionnaires, separated by a three-month period, in exchange for minor course credit. The first questionnaire was administered at Time One, denoting the initial period of participation. The questionnaire consisted of the Control in Relationships Scale (CIR; Naydenova & Jones, 2008), Norton's Quality of Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983), an abbreviated version of the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI; Adams & Jones, 1997) and an abbreviated version of the Acts of Forgiveness scale (Drinnon, 2000). In addition to completing the above-mentioned measures, at Both Time 1 and Time 2, the participants were asked to describe, in their own words, a written account for an instance of disagreement with their current romantic partner as a function of control in the relationship during the last two weeks. The participants were provided with ample space to provide their retrospective narrative. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants also provided demographic data such as their age, gender, and the length of their current romantic relationship. At Time Two the participants were asked to complete an identical questionnaire with the exception that an abbreviated Acts of Forgiveness Scale was included in order to assess the relationship between control and forgiveness.

One of the goals of the present research was to further validate CIR. An important part of validating any measure is determining whether its scores are associated with relevant construct indicators other than psychological tests. Doing so controls for method variance. For example, are CIR scores associated with actual behavior derived from rating participants' control narrative?

Two undergraduate students, one male and one female, independently read the narrative accounts. Rater A read 200 of the narratives from both Time 1 and Time 2 and Rater B read 200 of the narratives from both Time 1 and Time 2. Therefore, the raters read a partially overlapping but not a redundant set of narratives. The inter-raters reliabilities were computed by comparing both raters' appraisals of the overlapping narratives (103 narratives at Both Time 1 and Time 2). The raters were instructed to judge the participants' narratives to the best of their abilities for: a) the extent to which the narrative describes participants' own control in the relationship; b) the extent to which the narrative describes participants' partner control; and c) the severity of the conflict. The two judges rated all narrative accounts using a 5-point Likert scale verbally anchored at the end points with *not controlling* (1) and *very controlling* (5) for own and partner control and *not serious* (1) and *very serious* (5) for the seriousness of the conflict.

The raters were not given a detailed coding protocol but they were instructed to rate as controlling if any of the participants or their partners exhibited the following types of behavior: (a) fighting for control (e.g. clash with partner over wanting more control); (b) dominance (desire to usurp all decision-making); (c) anxiety control (e.g. jealousy, wanting to monitor the partner); (d) everyday control (make all the everyday decisions in a relationships without seeking input from the partner); and (e) desire for excessive control (e.g. wanting to take over all relationship responsibilities).

Measures

Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI; Adams & Jones, 1997) is a 45-item scale that assesses marital commitment. The scale is comprised of three factors:

Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage and Feelings of Entrapment, which together account for 46 % of the variance. The first factor's Cronbach's Alpha is .91 and the corresponding values for the second and the third are .89 and .86. For the present study, an abbreviated version of the scale was used and all the items were reworded so they pertained to dating partners, instead of spouses. For example, the sample item "A marriage should be protected at all costs" was reworded to "A relationship should be protected at all costs". The scale is verbally anchored as *Strongly Disagree* (1) and *Strongly Agree* (5). The scale has been validated on numerous occasions and a higher score represents greater commitment to the partner. Five of the highest loading items on the first and second factors and three of the highest loading items on the third factor were utilized. In the present study the reliability estimates were .84, .54, and .55 respectively for each factor at Time 1 and .87, .64, and .57 at Time 2.

Abbreviated Acts of Forgiveness Scale (AFS; Drinnon, 2000). An abbreviated version of the Acts of Forgiveness Scale was created with the five highest loading items. The original scale contains 45 items assessing offense-specific forgiveness. The scale has high internal reliability (coefficient alpha = .97). The scale has been extensively validated with other forgiveness measures and related constructs such as vengeance. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha was .81. The scale was used only at Time 2. This abbreviated version of the scale has already been used in the literature (May & Jones, 2007) and its convergent and discriminant validity have been demonstrated in comparison with related scales such as vengeance and guilt.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Table 10 presents means, standard deviations, and t-test statistics for all variables examined in the present study at Time 1 and Time 2. Consistent with previous research using the CIR, men reported higher control in relationships ($M = 72.97$, $SD = 14.29$) than women ($M = 69.46$, $SD = 17.03$) at Time 1 and again at Time 2 ($M = 71.47$, $SD = 15.44$ for men and $M = 69.24$, $SD = 17.90$ for women). However, this observed difference in the magnitude of CIR scores did not reach significance ($t(129) = 1.62$, ns for Time 1 and $t(129) = 1.23$, ns for Time 2). Control in relationships scores were found to be reliable over time, the test-retest correlation of CIR was $r(294) = .81$. However, results indicated that CIR ratings did not significantly decrease over time, as expected, $t(294) = 1.31$, ns . The test-retest correlation of QMI was also very robust, $r(294) = .91$, $p < .01$. However, as predicted, participants' ratings of relationship satisfaction significantly decreased from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(294) = 3.05$, $p < .01$. The test-retest correlations of DCI also satisfied conventional standards of test-retest reliability, $r(294) = .74$, $p < .01$ and as expected commitment to the relationship significantly decreased over time, $t(294) = 19.56$, $p < .01$.

Substantive Analyses

Related analyses were used to examine the temporal change of QMI, CIR and commitment from Time 1 to Time 2 for people who reported themselves to be high, low, or moderate on control in relationships at Time 1. For the purposes of the present analyses, we split the respondents into three groups: participants who reported

themselves to be at least 1 standard deviation above the CIR mean (high CIR), individuals who were at least 1 standard deviation below CIR (low CIR) and the rest of the participants.

High CIR. For people who exhibited high control in relationships at Time 1, CIR significantly decreased from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(45) = 2.50, p = .02$, indicating regression to the mean. Relationship satisfaction also decreased over time for these individuals but this relationship was unreliable, $t(45) = 1.70, ns$. Moreover, consistent with our predictions commitment to the relationship decreased over time for high control individuals $t(45) = 4.90, p < .01$. We further explored the relationship between gender and commitment. For women, who reported themselves to be controlling in their relationship, the results indicated that control in relationships no longer decreased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(27) = 1.69, ns$, but their relationship satisfaction significantly decreased over time, $t(27) = 2.29, p < .03$, as did their commitment to the relationship, which also decreased significantly over time, $t(27) = 5.07, p < .01$. Only eighteen men fell into that category and a paired t-test indicated that their scores at Time 1 and Time 2 did not significantly change on any of the variables.

Low CIR. We also examined the temporal change from Time 1 to Time 2 in CIR, relationship satisfaction, and commitment for individuals who reported themselves to be low on CIR. For these individuals, their reported control level did not significantly change from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(52) = 1.51, ns$. The relationship satisfaction of these individuals also did not change significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(52) = .74, ns$. However, their commitment to the relationship decreased t

(52) = 10.77, $p < .01$. Only 15 of the participants who had indicated low control in relationships were men, and their results replicated the pattern of results for the general population of low control individuals. Specifically, their reported CIR did not significantly change over time, $t(15) = .90$, *ns* and their ratings on the QMI did not change from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(15) = -.26$, *ns*, but their commitment to the relationship significantly decreased from Time 1 to Time 2 $t(15) = 5.11$, $p < .01$. For women, we observed a similar pattern of results, no significant temporal change for CIR, $t(38) = 1.23$, *ns*, and no significant change in reported relationship satisfaction, $t(38) = .89$, *ns*. However, their scores on the DCI significantly decreases from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(38) = 9.54$, $p < .01$.

Moderate CIR. A paired-sample t-test revealed that the CIR ratings of people with average scores on CIR at Time 1 did not significantly change from Time to Time 2, $t(195) = 1.17$, *ns*, but that their relationships satisfaction decreased over time, $t(195) = 2.43$, $p < .02$. Their commitment to the relationship also decreased over time, $t(195) = 17.07$, $p < .01$. The patterns of results for men and women were similar. For men, CIR did not significantly change from Time 1 to Time 2, $t(95) = 1.36$, *ns*. However, their relationship satisfaction ratings significantly decreased over time $t(95) = 3.36$, $p < .01$ as did their commitment to the relationship, $t(95) = 11.17$, $p < .01$. For women, CIR scores again did not significantly change over time, $t(99) = .21$, *ns*. An interesting pattern occurred when we assessed the temporal stability for relationship satisfaction for women who had average CIR ratings at Time 1. Their relationship satisfaction slightly increased, albeit not significantly, over time, which was in contrast to most other groups, $t(99) = -.33$, *ns*. Their commitment to the

relationship decreased over time, $t(99) = 13.30, p < .01$, which is consistent with the results from all the other CIR groups.

In summary, CIR scores decreased over time only for high control individuals. Irrespective of reported control level at Time 1, commitment to the relationship significantly decreased over the 3-month period. Relationship satisfaction scores decreased over time for women who reported themselves to be high on control in relationships. This finding is consistent with the pattern of results from Study 1 and extant research, which suggest that when women are high on control that has negative effects on their relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction scores also decreased for men who were moderate in control.

Correlational Analyses

Table 11 presents the correlations among control in relationships and relationship satisfaction and commitment. As we expected based on numerous studies done with CIR, CIR was negatively correlated with QMI both at Time 1 and Time 2 of the assessment. Furthermore, CIR was inversely correlated with commitment on both times of the assessment and relationship satisfaction was positively associated with commitment. All of the above correlations were significant.

CIR and Dimensions of Commitment

We assessed the associations between CIR and each of the three dimensions of the DCI. As Table 3 presents, CIR was significantly inversely associated with: a) commitment to the partner (which is based on devotion and personal dedication); b) commitment to the relationship (based on moral obligation); and c) feelings of entrapment factor (which is based on subjective appraisal of external factors that

make leaving the relationship difficult such as friends' and family disapproval) at both Time 1 and Time 2 of the assessment.

CIR and Relationship Length

We examined the association between control in relationships and relationship stage. Relationship length ranged from 1 month to 98 months, $M = 16.40$, $SD = 15.16$. The associations between control in relationships and relationship length, contrary to predictions, was unreliable, $r(294) = .06$, *ns*. We split the sample into three groups based on whether they were one deviation below or above the mean of relationship length at Time 1. One group contained people who have been in a relationship for more than 32 months (serious stage of the relationship), the other contained people who have been in a relationship for less than 3 months, which usually indicates that the relationship is still in the beginning stages and the last group contained the rest of the participants. The results indicated that for participants who have indicated that their relationship has lasted less than 3 months, relationship length was not correlated with their levels of control in relationships, $r(40) = .08$, *ns*. For participants who have indicated that they are in a longer relationship (more than 32 months), the results also suggested that CIR was not reliably correlated with relationship length, $r(38) = .06$, *ns* and for people who had reported average length for their relationships, we observed a similar pattern of results $r(216) = .02$, *ns*. These insignificant findings are not surprising given the fact that we have restricted the range of the responses but they do suggest that in the present study relationship length was not associated with reported control in relationships. Furthermore, CIR was inversely correlated with

relationship satisfaction and commitment irrespective of the relationship length. The only variable that was influenced by the relationship length was forgiveness.

CIR and Forgiveness

Ratings of forgiveness were only solicited from the participants at Time 2. Forgiveness inversely correlated with control in relationships when it was measured at Time 2, $r(294) = -.45, p < .01$. However, when the participant sample was split into three groups according to relationship length, the association between control in relationships and forgiveness was unreliable for low relationship length individuals, $r(40) = -.26, n.s.$ This pattern of results can be interpreted as that in the beginning stages of the relationship there aren't usually enough instances of betrayal so that forgiveness is often not needed in relationships. However, as the relationship progresses and the partners might experience betrayals, disappointment or disillusionment, forgiveness might become necessary. Consistent with this interpretation, CIR was inversely correlated with forgiveness for individuals who reported themselves to be in long relationships ($r(38) = -.55, p < .01$), as well for individuals whose relationships had average length, $r(216) = -.47, p < .01$.

Narrative Account of Control in Relationships

Interrater Reliability. The consistency of the ratings was estimated by the percentage of agreement between the two judges. The following estimates of rater reliability were observed: a). own control (80.2%), b). partner control (89.8%), and c). seriousness of the conflict (95.2%). Given the relatively high inter-rater agreement, the classifications made by the first rater were arbitrarily selected for subsequent analyses.

Categories of Control. The most common category of control from the final sample was everyday control (e.g. choosing what movie to watch, where to eat and who should have the controller when the couple watches TV). This category mapped onto CIR's factor of the same name and it accounted for 58.7 % of all the instances of control the participants discussed. Below is a quote from a participant that best illustrates this category:

My partner and I usually get along fairly well, but he has a habit of controlling the entertainment when we are together. He picks the show we watch or the cd to play when we are driving. It drives me nuts sometimes because we have things that we both like, and then things that I just like or he just likes. When we are together it always has to be something we both like or only he likes, never what I just like. The last argument we had was when we got in the car and he took out my Ani DiFranco cd, because it wasn't "our" music, but then put in Metalic, that I don't like. It seems silly now, but at the time I thought that was one of the rudest things ever.

The second category of the control narratives was labeled "anxiety control" and it corresponded to CIR's factor of the same name. This category accounted for 29.3 % of all the control narratives. Narratives that fell into this category described situations where control issues arose out of relationship anxiety (e.g. jealousy). Here is an illustrative narrative:

In my partner's previous relationship he and his fiancée' were going to have a child, but she lost it at 5months. He was having trouble convincing me that he will never not be in contact with her. I completely understood, but the point was that she did not want anything to do with him anymore, but he could not let her go. Our argument started with me wanting him to at least take her off of his friends list on his myspace page. She was ranked as number one on his page, then his best friend (who is also a female) is listed second. This "best friend" is the girl he "accidentally" cheated on his fiancée' with. I wanted both of these girls off of his page, but he refused.

The third category of the control narratives had to do with issue of control arising out of the couple dealing with one partner trying to control the drug/alcohol problem of the other partner. This category accounted for 6.8 % of all the narratives. Here is an example:

My girlfriend Chelsea always get mad at me when I go out with my friends because she thinks I'm smoking weed. Even though i am not, she makes me come back to see her from wherever i am so that she can make sure. I dont really have a problem with doing this but it's very annoying. She gets mad at me because she feels she cant trust me.

The fourth category of control narratives was labeled dominance and it described individuals who prefer to be in total control of the relationships and did not trust their partner with making important decisions. This category corresponded to the dominance factor of the CIR and accounted for 3.4 % of all the narratives. Here is an illustrative example of that category:

My girlfriend and I used have 2 check accounts and each pay bills. After she overdrew her account we closed it, then I paid all the bills. She still wanted some responsibility so I opened another account and gave her access to it to pay her car insurance and her cell phone. This worked fine for us until one of her co-workers found out and told her she should leave me unless I was ok with her having an account. She came home and told me what her co-worker had said, and I kept insisting that what we did worked fine. I further pointed out that I am the one who pays all the bills and thus needs to be the one with most access to the accounts; also she frequently forgets to pay her insurance and phone (the only two she has to pay) and I have to cover for her. Then I told her that she could open an account but that I would not cover for her if it got messed up. After sleeping on the matter she decided that her coworker was being antagonistic and there was no need to change what was working for us.

The fifth category was labeled fighting for control and it corresponded to the same factor of CIR and accounted for 2.7% of all the narratives. A sample narrative from this category is:

I remember one time in particular that I had an argument with my girlfriend where we were both struggling for control. It was a weekend and I had told one of my friends that I would go out with him. My girlfriend I guess had already assumed she was going to spend every moment of the weekend with me. I explained to her that Saturday I was going out with my friends and she began to get somewhat angry and frustrated. I was not about to let her control my weekend so I told her what I was going out. She was angry but she got over it and I felt it was important for her to deal with it because she should not act that way at all because it is completely ridiculous.

Taken all of these findings into account, these five categories correspond to CIR's factor structure with the exception of the drug/alcohol category that is not featured in

the CIR. It is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of control issues college students have to deal with had to do with minor everyday problems, which suggest that college students are rarely faced with major relationship problems.

Correlational Analyses. As presented in Table 13, own control at Time 1 as rated by the coders was significantly correlated with CIR at both Time 1 and Time 2, suggesting that CIR scores are associated with instances of actual behavior. Furthermore, own control at Time 2 was also significantly correlated with CIR scores at Time 2, but not with CIR scores at Time 1. The fact that own scores at Time 2 did not correlate with CIR scores at Time 1, may be accounted for by individual's variability in behavior. Personality researchers have consistently pointed out that intraindividual behavior will vary greatly across situations and time (Fleeson 2001, 2004; Bem & Allen, 1974, Bem, 1977). Furthermore, the finding that own behavior was not stable between Time 1 and Time 2 can also theoretically be explained by the fact that at Time 1, participants did not disclose a narrative account of a serious argument in their relationship ($M = 1.22$, $SD = .86$) as rated by our independent coders. At Time 2, however, the participants disclosed more serious instances of conflict in their relationship ($M = 2.5$, $SD = .98$). Furthermore, as predicted, CIR was also associated with the seriousness of the conflict at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Hierarchical Regression. Regression analyses were performed to determine usefulness of the three predictor variables (reported own control on the control narrative, reported partner control on the narrative and ratings on the CIR) on the relationship satisfaction ratings of the participant at both Time 1 and Time 2. As presented in Table 14, results for both Time 1 and Time 2 indicated that CIR was the

only significant predictor of relationship satisfaction of the three-predictor variables ($\beta = -.52$, $t(293) = 10.49$, $p < .01$ at Time 1 and $\beta = -.51$, $t(293) = 10.32$, $p < .01$ at Time 2). Own and partner ratings on control did not account for any of the variance above and beyond CIR. CIR explained a significant proportion of variance in relationship satisfaction, $R^2 = .27$, $F(1, 292) = 109.95$, $p < .01$ at Time 1 and $R^2 = .26$, $F(1, 292) = 106.65$, $p < .01$ at Time 2.

Discussion

As predicted, in the current study control in relationships was inversely associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment to the relationship and the partner. In other words, people who score high on the CIR, also report low relationship satisfaction and commitment to the relationship and their partner. This is consistent with both extant research and previous research using the CIR. In the current study, however, we were able to examine the above associations from a longitudinal perspective. Findings from this study indicated that CIR scores did not significantly change over time except of high control individuals, which might have indicated regression to the mean. This pattern of results is contrary to previous research, which indicates that control in relationships significantly declines every year for both wives and husbands (Stets & Hammons, 2002). It is important to point out, however, that three months may not be enough time for any major changes in relationship control to occur.

Consistent with predictions, relationship satisfaction significantly decreased over time for high control women and men who reported average CIR scores at Time 1. This pattern of results is consistent with the results of Study 1 and

emphasized the detrimental effects of high own control on immediate and long-term women's relationship satisfaction. Extant research points out that contrary to women, men desire more control in relationships (Stets, 1991). Although this may account for the low relationship satisfaction of men who were moderate in control in relationships (e.g. they are dissatisfied because they need more control) this finding has not been consistent across studies and further research is needed to examine the relationship between control and men's relationship satisfaction. Commitment to the partner and the relationship was found to significantly decrease over time for all participants irrespective of their reported control ratings, which has interesting implications for relationship dynamics as the relationship progresses. This is consistent with previous research on the subject done with married couples, which suggested that commitment tends to significantly decrease over time (Stets & Hammons, 2002).

Control in relationships was not associated with relationship length and contrary to the results of Study 1 the associations between control, relationship satisfaction and commitment did not change as a factor of relationship length. The only construct that was associated with relationship length was forgiveness, for people who were in the beginning stages of the relationship there was an unreliable relationship between control and forgiveness, whereas that association was significant for individuals who were in longer relationships.

Furthermore, the results of the current study demonstrated that control in relationships was associated with instances of own behavioral control as reported by the participants in control narratives at both Time 1 and Time 2. However, own control as reported by the narratives was not reliable over time. This pattern of results

is consistent with current research on the person-situation debate, which has reported that individual's behavior is highly variable and a process approach looking at many instances of the behavior over time is needed to explain any behavior (Fleeson, 2004). When we compared reported own control behavior and CIR ratings as predictors of own relationship satisfaction, results indicated that CIR is a better predictor of relationship satisfaction and own reported control did not explain any of the variance in relationship satisfaction above and beyond CIR. Findings also indicated that there are five main themes of control in the narrative, which generally overlapped with CIR's five-factors solution with the exception of drug and alcohol control (e.g. when one partner reports the need controls the other partner's behavior because of the partner's substance abuse problems).

CHAPTER IV

General Discussion

Although control is beneficial for the individual, the majority of researchers concur that control was often associated with negative consequences for the relationship. For example, individual control has been associated with lower criminality and better adjustment (O'Neill and Kerig, 2000; Blackwell & Reed, 2003). By contrast, control in relationships has been linked to lower self-mastery, higher anxiety, higher jealousy, lower trust, lower commitment (for men), higher conflict, and high psychological and physical abuse (Stets, 1993, 1995). The overarching aim of the present studies was to provide evidence for the utility of the CIR measure and further assess the negative effects of control for close relationships. The results of the two studies indicated that control in relationships is strongly associated with indicators of poor relationship functioning such as low relationship satisfaction and commitment both cross-sectionally and over time.

Each of the present studies was designed to assess a specific set of issues. First, Study 1 assessed the association between control and relationship satisfaction from a dyadic perspective. Specifically, the results of Study 1 indicated that partner control is strongly correlated with own relationship satisfaction for women but not for men and that men tend to perceive the relationship to be more egalitarian (e.g. partners share control of the relationship) than in reality. Furthermore, Study 1's pattern of results confirmed a curvilinear relationship between relationship length and control, with individuals with average relationship length reporting the highest incidence of control in their relationships. A secondary goal of Study 1 was to

compare CIR with extant power measure and the results suggested that CIR was significantly associated with most power measures, but it was not a redundant construct and it was a better predictor of relationship satisfaction than any of the power measures. This pattern of results suggests that control is a conceptually different, more relational, construct than power and it warrants further research.

Second, Study 2 assessed the relationship between control and satisfaction from a longitudinal point of view and the results suggested that individual's self-perceived control ratings at Time 1 is associated with their relationship satisfaction at Time 2, especially for high control women and average control men. The study also examined the association between relationship length and CIR scores and did not find any significant association between the two constructs. One of the main goals of Study 2 was to further validate the CIR using participants' own accounts of relationship control. As expected, CIR was significantly associated with ratings of one's own control from the participants' narratives at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Actual vs. Perceived Similarity on CIR

Extant research suggest that although individuals benefit from having control, their control might become an issue for the relationship, especially if it was not shared with their partners (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). The consequences of one-sided relational control had been predominantly negative for the relationship such as couple violence, devaluation of the partner, low marital satisfaction and lack of intimacy (Kipnis et al., 1976; Miller et al., 1983; O'Neill & Kerig, 2000; Zak et al., 1997). On the other hand, egalitarian relationships (i.e. relationships, in which partners share control and power) have been associated with high marital adjustment,

a high rate of trust and positive experiences between the partners, a low rate of defensiveness, and a low likelihood of partner withdrawal and eventual divorce (Gottman, 1994). In a recent review of the literature, Naydenova & Jones (2007) concluded that seventy-five percent of all the articles that discuss power and control conclude that egalitarian families boast the highest marital satisfaction.

In Study 1, we examined the control structure in relationships by assessing partners' actual similarity on control versus their perceived similarity on control. Kim and Emery (2003) have suggested that egalitarian couples are the most common types of couples that exist. In Study 1, we tested this conclusion and we found out that the majority of couples perceive themselves to be much more similar on control in relationships than in reality. In other words, although most couples perceive themselves to be egalitarian, they are not, which may in turn lead to relationship problems. Specifically, men tend to have higher control in relationships than women, although this difference was not significant in the present research but has been supported by extant research. For example, Breznyak and Whisman (2004) reported that women had more power when it came to relationship maintenance and power processes (e.g. style of communication and interaction), but men had slightly more power when it came to making decisions (i.e. control in relationships).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to point out although own perception was more closely associated with expected partner ratings than partner's actual behavior for both men and women, men usually rated their partners to be significantly more similar to them than in reality. Thus, in the present studies, women were better judges of control dynamics in the relationship than men. This finding may be theoretically

explained by three different theoretical approaches. First of all, this pattern of results may be accounted for by research that has found out that women in general are more attentive to relationship problems and more socially sensitive than men (Rubin et al., 1981; Hall, 1978). Secondly, Resource Theory suggests that because women have historically had fewer resources at their disposal (e.g. money, control in relationships) than men, they are particularly attuned to control in relationships dynamics. Thirdly, related research on procedural justice suggests that women, because of their history of being subject to discrimination and disadvantage, tend to mistrust relationships and to be very sensitive to the distribution of control in the relationship. Thus, they tend to have a more realistic perception of control dynamics in the relationship than men do, who historically have always possessed control both at the societal level and at interpersonal level (Azzi & Jost, 1994). However, at this point any tentative explanation of the results is limited by speculation and further research on gender differences on control in relationships is needed. In any case, our results suggest that women, in general, are better judges of relationship functioning than men and men report higher control than women.

CIR and Relationship Satisfaction

The results from Study 1 and Study 2 also indicated that women are more satisfied when they do not perceive themselves as being in control of the relationship. Specifically, the results of Study 2 suggested that only women who reported themselves to be high on control in relationships at Time 1 reported their relationship satisfaction to significantly decline over time. Previous research on commitment and control in relationships (Stets & Hammons, 2002) has found that partner control is a

better predictor of commitment than own control. Specifically, wives' control was associated with husband's lower committed to the relationship. In the present research, we confirmed that this pattern of results applies to college dating couples and to relationship satisfaction as well as commitment.

Furthermore, the only other group with significant decline of relationship satisfaction over time was men who had average ratings of own control in relationships at Time 1. This finding is consistent with extant research, which has shown that men prefer to be in control of the relationship and men's lower relationship control might lead them to be dissatisfied with the relationship and sometimes might become a catalyst for domestic violence (Gage & Hutchinson, 2006; Coleman & Straus, 1990; Kim & Emery, 2003).

CIR and Relationship Length

The findings of the present studies provided mixed results as to the association between relationship length and control in relationships. Stets (1991; 1993; 1995) has shown that length of the relationship is one of the main predictor of control in relationship. For example, Stets has reported that people in average length relationships have the highest control ratings as opposed to people in the beginning stages of their relationship, who generally do not report control issues and people in steady, committed relationships, who have already established the control and trust dynamics in their relationship, and also do not report many control issues. This pattern of results was confirmed in Study 1. When we examined this association using a longitudinal approach in Study 2, the association between control and relationship length was unreliable and CIR scores did not significantly change over time. A

possible explanation for non-significant change over time is that three months was not enough time for any changes in self-perceived relationship control to occur. In any case, further research on the association between control and relationship length is needed.

Limitations

This research was limited in several ways that can potentially affect the interpretation or the importance of the results. First, although not unusual, the present research was based on self-report and was marginally contaminated with various types of social desirability and response biases. Second, the cross-sectional nature of Study 1 also limited the assumptions of causal direction, although the observed patterns in the results provided important insight into the operating characteristics of control and were confirmed in Study 1. However, further research is needed to clarify the association between control and relevant variables such as relationships satisfaction by use of experimental methods.

Third, because the participants in the study were exclusively college students, generalizations from our samples to older and married people should be entertained only with caution. College dating relationships may be different from dating relationships in the general population and marriage. For example, previous research on the subject has shown that college students, especially men, tend to place greater value on sexuality in dating relationships (Maccorquodale, 1989). Furthermore college relationships may differ from other romantic relationships when it comes to the number of alternatives each partner has or the level of commitment between the

partners. It would be desirable for future studies to administer the CIR scale to older individuals involved in a variety of relationships, including marriage.

Conclusions

Despite these limitations, the results from Study 1 and Study 2 provided support for the utility of the Control in Relationships Scale. By utilizing a psychometric approach, the present studies have addressed the question of what control means in the context of romantic relationships and what it means in its relationship to power. Further, strong evidence was found to support the notion that control is associated with negative relationship functioning. Moreover, these conclusions were supported by divergent methods, involving many participants and numerous analytic procedures. The present research not only contributes to the body of literature regarding the measurement of control in relationships, but may also stimulate further research using experimental methods to examine the various hypotheses suggested by these findings.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Psychometric Characteristics of CIR Perspectives for Men and Women

Perspective	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	α	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>
CIR	66.58	15.44	.91	36	102
PCIR	67.46	16.57	.91	37	114
PPercCIR	71.56	17.55	.91	36	117
PownCIR	67.81	17.41	.92	33	112
CIR	64.60	17.60	.94	32	112
PCIR	64.27	14.38	.90	27	102
PPercCIR	67.77	18.32	.94	30	116
POwnCIR	65.15	14.83	.91	34	107

Note. CIR = Control in Relationships Scale; PCIR = Partner Control in Relationships Scale; PPercCIR = Partner Perception Control in Relationships Scale; PownCIR = Partner Own Control in Relationships Scale.

Table 2

Dyadic Correlations between the CIR perspectives and Relationship Satisfaction

	QMI
CIR	-.37**
PCIR	-.45**
PPercCIR	-.32**
POWN	-.42**

Note: QMI= Relationship Satisfaction, CIR = Control in Relationships Scale;
 PCIR=Control in Relationships Scale answered in terms of the partner; PPercCIR =
 Control in Relationships Scale answered in terms of partner perceptions; POWN=
 Control in Relationships Scale of partner's own ratings

Table 3

Correlations between CIR and Relationship Satisfaction for Men and Women

Perspective	<u>QMI</u>	<u>FQMI</u>
CIR	-.36**	.48**
PCIR	-.30*	-.23
PPercCIR	-.33**	.06
POWN	.26*	-.26*
CIR	-.24	-.58**
PCIR	-.19	-.48**
PPercCIR	-.14	-.48**
POWN	-.26*	-.50**

Note: QMI= Men's Relationship Satisfaction, FQMI= Women's Relationship Satisfaction; CIR = Control in Relationships Scale; PCIR=Control in Relationships Scale answered in terms of the partner; PPercCIR = Control in Relationships Scale answered in terms of partner perceptions; POWN= Control in Relationships Scale of partner's own ratings

Table 4

Difference between Actual and Perceived Similarity for CIR

	Actual Similarity	Perceived Similarity	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Dyadic level	.39**	.58**	1.48	.06
Men	.39**	.76**	3.46	.01
Women	.39**	.54**	1.14	<i>ns</i>

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Difference between Understanding and Reciprocity for CIR

	Understanding	Reciprocity	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Men	.46**	.27*	1.66	.05
Women	.41**	.27*	.98	<i>ns</i>

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 6

Correlations Between CIR and Extant Control and Power Measures at the Dyadic

Level

Measure	<i>r</i>
Efficacy	-.43**
SRPS	-.35**
Relationship Control	-.33**
Dominance	.18*
Power Perception	.05
Power Satisfaction	-.29*
Stet's Control	.49**
Internal MMLOC	.33**
External MMLOC	-.07

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

MMLOC = Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale; SRPS = Sexual Relationship

Power Scale; Efficacy = Efficacy Expectations.

Table 7

Correlations Between CIR and Extant Control and Power Measures for Men

Measure	r
Efficacy	-.42**
SRPS	-.25*
Relationship Control	-.44**
Dominance	.31**
Power Perception	.02
Power Satisfaction	-.17
Stet's Control	.52**
Internal MMLOC	.23*
External MMLOC	-.10

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01.

MMLOC = Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale; SRPS = Sexual Relationship

Power Scale; Efficacy = Efficacy Expectations.

Table 8

Correlations Between CIR and Extant Control and Power Measures for Women

Measure	<i>r</i>
Efficacy	-.44**
ISRS	-.26*
Relationship Control	-.33**
Dominance	.11
Power Perception	.15
Power Satisfaction	-.39**
Stet's Control	.48**
Internal MMLOC	.44**
External MMLOC	-.23*

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

MMLOC = Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale; SRPS = Sexual Relationship

Power Scale; Efficacy = Efficacy Expectations.

Table 9

Hierarchical Regression of Control Scales on Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Multiple R	R ²	R ² Change	Beta	<i>t</i>
Quality of Marriage Index for Women (5 items)					
Internal MMLOC	.58	.34	.24	-.58	5.49**
CIR	.68	.46	.08	-.39	3.61**
Power Sat	.72	.52	.02	.26	2.53**
Quality of Marriage Index for Men					
Internal MMLOC	.48	.24	.24	-.48	4.33**
Efficacy	.55	.31	.07	-.31	2.42*
Quality of Marriage Index (Dyad)					
Internal MMLOC	.53	.28	.28	-.53	6.85**
Efficacy	.55	.29	.03	-.41	2.32**
Partner CIR	.58	.32	.02	-.19	2.04*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 10

Change in control, relationship satisfaction and commitment over time

	Time One		Time Two		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	<i>s.d.</i>	M	<i>s.d.</i>		
CIR	71.91	15.96	70.22	16.87	1.31	<i>ns</i>
QMI	22.18	5.42	21.39	10.91	3.05	.01
DCI	49.54	8.10	42.45	8.86	19.56	.01

Note: df equals 294; CIR = Control in Relationships Scale, QMI = Quality of

Marriage Index; DCI = Dimensions of Commitment Inventory.

Table 11

Correlations between control in relationships, relationship satisfaction and commitment at both Time 1 and Time2

Scale	CIRT1	QMIT1	DCIT1	CIRT2	QMIT2	DCIT2
CIR T1	-	-.53**	-.39**	.81**	-.55**	-.37**
QMI T1	-	-	.62**	-.43**	.92**	.57**
DCI T1	-	-	-	-.34**	.59**	.74**
CIR T2	-	-	-	-	-.52**	-.36**
QMI T2	-	-	-	-	-	.65**

Note: CIR = Control in Relationships Scale, QMI = Quality of Marriage Index; DCI = Dimensions of Commitment Inventory.

Table 12

Correlations between control in relationships and the three dimensions of commitment at both Time 1 and Time2

Scale	<u>Time 1</u>			<u>Time 2</u>		
	CTP	CTR	FE	CPT	CTR	FE
CIR	-.41**	-.31**	-.23**	-	-	-
CIR T2	-	-	-	-.47**	-.25**	-.19**

Note: CIR = Control in Relationships Scale Time 1; CIR T2 Control in Relationships Scale Time 2; CTP = Commitment to the Partner; CTR = Commitment to the Relationship; FE = Feelings of Entrapment.

Table 13

Correlations between CIR and behavioral measures of own, partner control and seriousness of the conflict at Time 1 and Time2

Scale	CIRT1	OwnT1	PartT1	SerT1	CIRT2	OwnT2	PartT2	SerT2
CIRT1	-	.18**	-.08	.12**	.81**	.11	.15*	.33**
OwnT1	-	-	-.32**	.08	.17**	.05	-.02	-.09
PartT1	-	-	-	.16**	.07	-.02	.13*	.15*
SerT1	-	-	-	-	.12*	-.08	-.05	.17**
CIR T2	-	-	-	-	-	.18**	-.06	.27**
OwnT2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.51**	.06
PartT2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.16**

Note: CIRT1 = Control in Relationships Scale at Time1, CIRT2= CIR at Time2; OwnT1 = own control at Time1; OwnT2 = own control at Time2; PartT1 = partner control at Time1; PartT2 = partner control at Time2; serT1 = ratings of the seriousness of the conflict at Time1; serT2 = ratings of the seriousness of the conflict at Time2.

Table 14

Relationship Satisfaction as a Function of Predictor Variables

Time	Model	R Square	F	p <
1	CIR	.27	106.65	.01
2	CIR	.27	109.95	.01

Note: CIR = Control in Relationships Scale

APPENDIX B

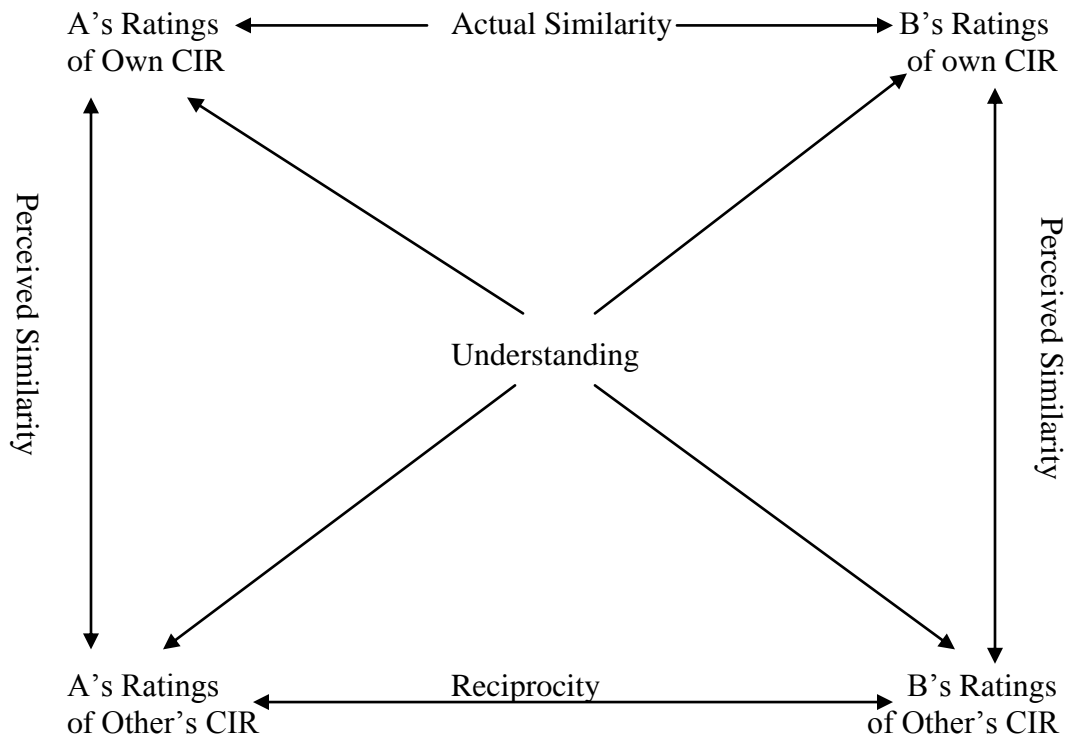


Figure 1. Illustration of Similarity and its Components

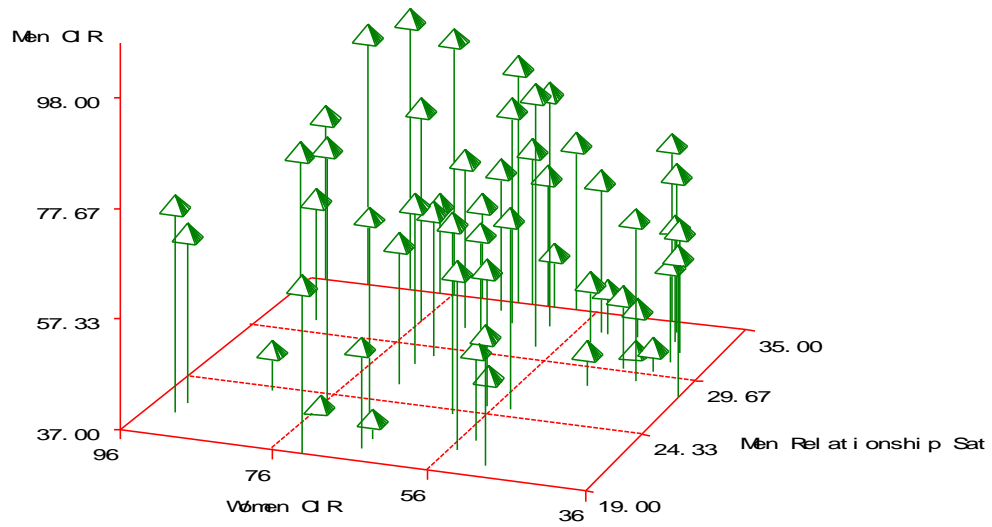


Figure 2. Illustration of the Association between Women and Men's Scores on CIR and Men's Relationship Satisfaction

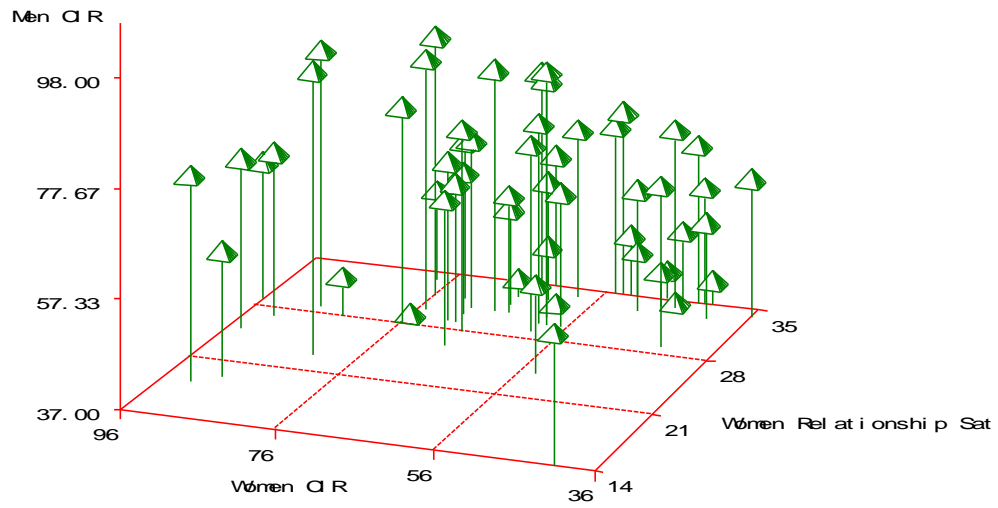


Figure 3. Illustration of the Association between Women and Men’s Scores on CIR and Women’s Relationship Satisfaction

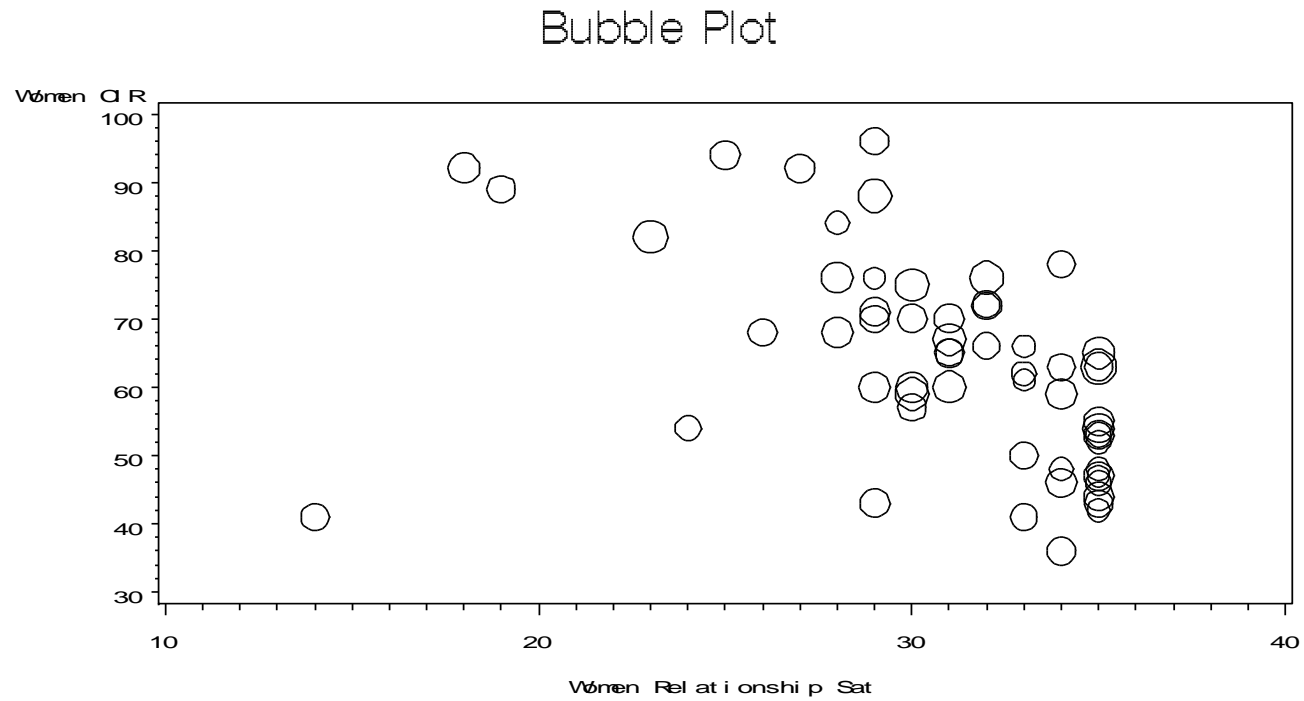


Figure 4. Multivariate Data Plot of the Association between Women CIR and Women's Relationship Satisfaction

VITA

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